

Upstream USA and Governor Markell Announce Private Funding to Improve Women's Health through Contraceptive Access

Groundbreaking public/private partnership to improve health outcomes for women and children will ensure that all Delaware women of reproductive age will have same-day access to the full range of contraceptive methods at low or no cost.

Wilmington, DE – Visiting with employees of the Henrietta Johnson Health Clinic today, Governor Jack Markell and Upstream USA announced private funding of more than \$10 million to Delaware CAN (Contraceptive Access Now), an initiative aimed at improving women's health and birth outcomes by ensuring that all women, regardless of insurance status or where they get their healthcare, will have same-day access to the full range of contraceptive methods at low or no cost.

The visit took place during one of the first training sessions for medical providers who, through this initiative, will receive assistance in gaining the tools to offer all contraception options to the people they serve. Trainings happening this week represent the official launch of the contraception access initiative unveiled during the Governor's [State of the State address](#).

"It is our responsibility to create an environment where people can fulfill their potential," **said Markell**. "I've come

to believe that improving women's overall health by helping them achieve their own goals and become pregnant only when they want to may be one of the most important things we can do in this regard. Delaware CAN will not only improve birth outcomes and overall women's health, it will expand opportunity and mobility for generations."

Unplanned pregnancies and births are associated with a range of adverse maternal and child health outcomes, including delayed prenatal care, increased poverty, premature birth, and poor physical and mental health. Delaware's unplanned pregnancy rate – 57 percent – is among the highest in the nation. Most unplanned pregnancies occur to women using a method of contraception that is not effective for them. The most effective methods, IUDs and implants, are not easily available to women across the country, including Delaware. Ensuring access to the full range of contraceptive methods is considered best medical practice and is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Reducing unplanned pregnancy rates will support the broad goal of providing quality, high value healthcare throughout the state.

Upstream USA will provide training, technical assistance, and quality improvement to all publicly funded health centers and the largest private providers in the state so that they can offer their patients the full range of contraceptive methods the same day requested. A consumer-facing public awareness campaign will inform women about the importance and availability of high quality care and their contraceptive options. A large, independent evaluation will track a broad set of outcomes.

"Upstream USA is grateful to our philanthropic partners who are so deeply committed to improving the health of women and children," **said Mark Edwards, co-founder of Upstream USA.** "The innovative public/private partnership of Delaware CAN

demonstrates the significance of women's health in efforts to expand opportunity."

Delaware CAN is a private/public partnership funded primarily by many individual philanthropists and foundations nationwide, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Delaware will reallocate \$1.75 million from existing Division of Public Health funds to support the project.

"The Hewlett Foundation is proud to support Upstream USA, a key partner in the Delaware CAN initiative to reduce unplanned pregnancy and improve birth outcomes by ensuring that all women of reproductive age receive same-day access to all contraceptive methods if they choose," **said Ruth Levine, Hewlett Foundation Program Director.** "Ensuring women have access to the best reproductive healthcare is one of the most important things we can do to expand opportunity."

For more information, please visit www.upstream.org/delawarecan.

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